

The COMMUNION

By C. J. SHARP

*Scriptural and Historical
Facts About the*
LORD'S SUPPER

The Communion

*Scriptural and Historical Facts
About the Lord's Supper*

By C. J. SHARP

FOR

ELDERS	YOUNG CHRISTIANS
DEACONS	VOLUNTEERS
MINISTERS	BIBLE TEACHERS

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

VERY early in the experience of those who, in the interest of Christian unity, sought to restore the order of things set forth in the New Testament, they encountered unexpected opposition. Their motives were misjudged, their sincerity was questioned, and, instead of being received as the proponents of a great plan of unity and advancement, they found themselves driven to the defensive in a bitter conflict.

In a few years there was a far-flung battle-line of debate and discussion over certain questions of "doctrine."

As an inevitable result, preachers defending the principle of restoration became strongly polemic in their preaching. They were bitterly attacked on a few doctrinal sectors and developed their main strength in their defense of those positions.

There was not too much emphasis on Christian doctrine, but there came to be too little emphasis upon spiritual life and devotion.

In this little book C. J. Sharp has brought to the forefront of our attention the great importance of the communion as an essential part of our complete obedience to Jesus Christ, as well as a vitally necessary part of our worship on the first day of the week.

His treatment of the subject is adapted to the needs of the common, every-day follower of the Lord, and hence to the needs of all Christians. On this point B. A. Abbott has well said that "at the Lord's table all

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are equal. There are no reserved seats. The poor may rejoice that he is exalted—the rich that he is made low. And this spirit of fraternity does not stop at the church door.”

It causes the Christian to be a more thoughtful citizen, a more considerate member of his family.

We know of nothing on the subject of the communion that is so Scriptural, so simple, and at the same time so comprehensive as this booklet.

E. W. THORNTON.

THE COMMUNION

CHAPTER I.

WHY THE COMMUNION?

"This do in remembrance of me."—Acts 20: 7.

I. Scriptural Reasons for the Communion

1. *Christ commanded it.*

The communion service is a service for Christians. Christians have settled the question of whether it is right to obey the commands of Jesus. The first reason for the communion is that it is plainly, positively and directly commanded by the Lord Himself. "Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, *Take, eat; this is my body.* And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, *Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matt. 26: 26-28).

"This is my body which is broken for you: *this do in remembrance of me.* After the same manner also he took the cup, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood. *This do ye,* as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he comes" (1 Cor. 11: 25, 26).

2. *The early disciples, guided by the Holy Spirit, practiced it.* "When the disciples had come together

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on the first day of the week *to break bread*, Paul preached unto them" (Acts 20:7).

II. Practical Reasons

We shall be saved not merely by becoming Christians, but by remaining Christians. "Be ye faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). How shall we be faithful? How hold out? God gives us a very plain way to become Christians. He gives us a very plain, practical way to keep on.

"Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

The communion is to renew in our minds, at the beginning of each week, the fact that we are *Christians*; that we have accepted Him and are wearing His name and following Him. If we start each week thus, we shall never wander far or fall.

III. Why the First Day of the Week?

1. *Scriptural reason.*

Again there is a Scriptural reason. Jesus did not personally say to do this on the first day of the week. He left many things pertaining to the church to be done and established by His chosen apostles. Among these things were the delivery of the command to be baptized (Acts 2:38), the starting of the church as described in Acts, and the establishment of the breaking of bread and choosing church officers.

He did say to them however: "If I depart, I will send him [the Holy Spirit] unto you." "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." (Read John 16:8-13.)

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“When the disciples had met together *on the first day of the week to break bread*, Paul preached unto them” (Acts 20:7). Here, under the direct guidance of an apostle, who was directly guided by the Holy Spirit whom Christ had sent, was shown and established the time for the breaking of bread.

2. *Historical reason.*

The communion service is a memorial of the resurrection. The resurrection occurred on the first day of the week. A memorial is kept on the date of the event which it memorializes.

IV. Why the First Day of Each Week?

1. The Scripture says: “The first day of the week.” There is no indication that some particular or random or occasional or monthly or yearly first day of the week is meant, but *the first day of the week* whenever it comes.

2. In Acts 2:42 four features of worship are mentioned in which they continued stedfastly. These are as follows:

(1) “The apostles’ doctrine,” or teaching and preaching and reading of the Word.

(2) The fellowship, or offerings for the work and for the needy.

(3) The breaking of bread, or communion.

(4) The prayers.

All Christians practice three of these every Sunday. Why leave out one of them while keeping the other three?

(For a complete and conclusive treatment of the subject of “Why the Communion on the First Day of Each Week,” see Alexander Campbell’s “Christian

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System," pages 265 to 292, under the subject of "Breaking the Loaf." For a brief summary of answers to objections to breaking bread on each first day of the week, see Chapter XV. of this book.)

Mr. Campbell wrote: "The first Christian congregation which met in Jerusalem, and which was constituted by the twelve apostles, did as statedly attend upon the breaking of the loaf in their public meetings as they did upon any other part of the Christian worship (Acts 2:42). 'They continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine, in the fellowship, in the breaking of the loaf, and in the prayers.' Ought we not, then, to continue as stedfast in the breaking of the loaf, as in the teaching of the apostles, as in the fellowship, as in the prayers commanded by the apostles?

"The apostles taught the churches to do all the Lord commanded. Whatever, then, the churches did by the appointment or concurrence of the apostles, they did by the commandment of Jesus Christ. Whatever acts of religious worship the apostles taught and sanctioned in one Christian congregation, they taught and sanctioned in all Christian congregations, because all are under the same government of one and the same King. The church in Troas met upon the first day of the week, consequently all the churches met upon the first day of the week for religious purposes.

"Among the acts of worship, or the institution of the Lord, to which the disciples attended in these meetings, the breaking of the loaf was so conspicuous and important that the churches are said to meet on the first day of the week for this purpose."

CHAPTER II.

EACH INDIVIDUAL'S NEED FOR THE COMMUNION

"Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."—Rom. 12: 2.

I. To Renew Our Purpose

Christ's every command was made with our good in mind. He never gave an idle command or one that is unimportant. Thus, in the clear-cut command, "Do this," He was planning for our need. By way of illustration, suppose there is a man who hears the Word on the Lord's Day, believes it and determines to obey. He confesses his faith and is happy. He is immediately baptized into Christ, and is even happier. He is face to face with his Saviour, his impressions are keen and his purpose is sound.

Monday comes with its distractions, trials and problems, and his impressions and purposes of Sunday are obscured and forced into the background. His face is turned slightly aside from his Lord. Tuesday comes with its tug and pull at his mind and his heart, and then Wednesday and each day of the week.

Sunday comes again. He goes to the Lord's house and meets the Lord at His table. The emblems tell the story of Christ's sacrifice for him; they remind him he is a Christian. The communion *renews* his mind. It brings him back face to face with his Lord. It resets his purpose.

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But let anything keep this Christian from the communion on the next Lord's Day, and the days of another week add their tug and pull to divert his mind and to weaken his purpose. His face is turned more aside with nothing to draw him back. Another week and another of like kind, and eventually he is facing directly away from his Lord. The communion is the most practical help to us in living the Christian life.

II. To Increase Our Appreciation of His Sacrifice

That person who does not appreciate his country seldom loves his country. He who does not appreciate his parents can scarcely be said to love his parents. Parents might become old, helpless, unattractive and uninteresting to the point of tiresomeness, but that son who never forgets the sacrifice and hard work of those gnarled hands—who appreciates and remembers—that son remains loyal and loving.

The communion is continually needed by every Christian, for it reminds us over and over of what the cost was that we might be saved (1 Cor. 11:29).

III. To Test and Show Our Loyalty

1. *A test of our loyalty.*

Could a more practical, simple or beautiful test of our continued loyalty to Christ be devised than this simple, but constant, remembrance of Him? We need this test. It is our soul meter. If we find there is indifference in us to the Lord's table, it is high time to be alarmed.

2. *A needed means of showing our loyalty.*

The communion is needed by each individual as a simple means to show Christ and show others our loyalty.

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alty. The question is not: Can you out-argue the denominations as to the proper time for the communion? The real question is: Were you at the communion last Lord's Day? Will you be at the Lord's table next Sunday? (See 1 Cor. 11:25, 26.)

3. *To establish a regular and fixed time for self-examination.* (See 1 Cor. 11:27-29.)

IV. To Increase Our Knowledge and Strength

1. *To increase our knowledge.*

Our knowledge does not consist in the multiplicity of truths we hear, but in a few truths we have made a part of us. The communion teaches exactly the same truths each time, but these are the foundation truths of all of Christianity. How many of us know, thoroughly know, the great message the communion teaches?

2. *To increase our strength.*

There are few who fail to recognize the need of all of us for increased strength, but many indeed fail to recognize that simple, sure, ever-available way which Christ provided to increase our strength. When we attend the communion as Christ meant we should attend it, and make use of the communion as Christ meant we should make use of it, we shall be ever increasing in strength (1 Cor. 11:29, 30).

3. *For the renewed mind we need the communion.* (See Rom. 12:2.)

CHAPTER III.

EACH INDIVIDUAL'S DUTY TO BE PRESENT AT THE COMMUNION EACH LORD'S DAY

"For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee."—Rom. 11: 21.

I. Differing Conceptions

Before we proceed with the discussion of the subject we halt to mention two conceptions of communion attendance that are quite different from what we shall present here.

1. *That occasional attendance is sufficient.*

By some of the denominations a yearly attendance at the communion at Easter-time is held to be passably satisfactory on the part of the individual, although the service itself is conducted quite regularly. In others the communion is conducted quarterly, and in others monthly, leaving the presumption clear that that is as often as the individual, at best, should be expected to commune.

2. *Privilege or obligation?*

We believe it fair to state that some members of churches of Christ, and even some preachers, hold the attendance at the communion to be a privilege of which we may avail ourselves, rather than a regular obligation to be regularly fulfilled.

3. *Gist of this study.*

In this study, while we do not in the least mean to ignore or obscure the communion as a *privilege*, and

EACH INDIVIDUAL'S DUTY

while we have emphasized in the preceding study the individual's *need*, we mean to emphasize the individual's *duty* somehow, somehow, somewhere, to pause on the first day of the week and remember the Lord on the Lord's Day in this the Lord's appointed way.

II. Duty to the Lord

The Lord commanded us: "Do this in remembrance of me." It is apparently His appointed place to meet us, and He promises to be present. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). We owe it to Him to obey His command. We owe it to Him to respect His request. We owe it to Him to keep our appointment with Him.

Illustration.—On President Garfield's first Saturday in Washington, as President, a member of the Cabinet insisted that a Cabinet meeting must be called at 10 A. M. the following day to handle a matter that threatened a national crisis. Garfield refused on the ground of another engagement. The Cabinet member insisted. Garfield still refused on the ground that this other was a prior engagement. Still the Cabinet minister insisted that the national matter was of such grave importance that Garfield should break the prior engagement. He refused. The Cabinet member remarked: "I would be interested to know with whom you could have an engagement so important that it could not be broken." Garfield replied: "I will be as frank as you are. My engagement is with my Lord, to meet Him at His house and at His table at 10:30 to-morrow, and I shall be there." He was there. The crisis passed. The nation survives. He was faithful. (1 Cor. 11:23-26.)

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III. Duty to Brethren

The absence of any member on any Lord's Day weakens the power, mars the joy and decreases the force of all the brethren. My presence strengthens, assures, encourages. My absence discourages. I owe it to my brethren to be present. (Heb. 12:28.)

IV. Duty to the Unsaved

When the unsaved go to the Lord's house they expect to see there those of us whom they know to be members of the church. Also it is with poor grace and weakened influence that we urge the unsaved man to obey the Lord's command to him to be baptized, when the unsaved man is perfectly aware that we are indifferent to the Lord's command to us to break bread. (Matt. 7:12.)

V. Duty to the Weaker Brethren and the Untaught

It is to be presumed that any one of us who might be teaching a class of new converts would certainly attempt to teach them to make it a practice to be regularly at the Lord's table. However logically, Scripturally and eloquently we might teach them, yet if those whom we had taught should see us, one time only, striding out of the Lord's house and away from the Lord's table, our act would counteract all we had said. "Our actions would shout so loud that they could not hear what we had to say." (See Rom. 14:13.)

CHAPTER IV.

CHRIST'S NEED FOR EVERY MEMBER PRESENT

"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."—John 17: 18.

I. Relation to Preceding Studies

We have said in previous studies on the communion that we should be at the Lord's table because it is commanded by the Lord. We also said that He never gave a command that was not intended for our good and our help. To obey these commands is our making and our saving. We *need* to obey them. On the other hand, Christ needs us.

It is quite plain that He planned to save the world by making use of the saved. It is quite plain that, while the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, yet He relies entirely on His followers to preach that gospel, else it will not be preached. Hence, these commands suggest not only that we need Him, and that they point the way to Him, but they also suggest that He needs us. We certainly need to be at the Lord's table on the first day of the week. Christ as certainly needs to have us there.

II. Keeping an Appointment with the Lord

As the story of Garfield, given in Chapter III., so beautifully illustrates, the communion is Christ's appointed place to meet us, and for us to meet Him. If

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He is to direct us to the end that we, as His army, may win the world to Him and for Him, then there must be a time and place where we meet Him and where He may depend on meeting us. The communion is that place which He designated. If He can not depend on our *meeting* Him at the place and at the time which He has appointed, He can never depend on us to carry out the work of *winning* the world.

III. To Show the World

Without intention of depreciating the dignity of the thought, may we say that Christ recognized that the world needs to be *shown* as well as *told*? Most certainly we believe that the Scripture—"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come"—refers to the fact that the bread and the cup actually picture His body and blood, and that the communion *pictures* and *shows* to the world His death and suffering. Also, we believe that this Scripture has a double meaning. Not only do the bread and the cup show something, but the very act of His followers in assembling shows something. The more unitedly, faithfully, continuously and persistently they assemble, the more the world is shown. Granted that the emblems were spread in every congregation and group around the world next Lord's Day, if only one-third or one-half of His followers were assembled, it would not show the world as it would if *all* His followers next Lord's Day would cut through all hindrances, and each one appear some time in the day to break bread in memory of Him. Their very faithfulness and loyalty would make an impression on the most careless and indifferent.

CHRIST'S NEED FOR EVERY MEMBER

IV. The Means of Fitting Us to Carry Out His Further Commands

Until Christ can teach us all to be faithful in that which is least, He will never be able to use us to accomplish that which is greatest. Until He can teach us to "do this," He can not trust us to *do that*. Until He has trained us faithfully to "assemble," He knows we are not ready to "Go into all the world." Until we are taught to have complete respect for His command to us, to keep the ordinance of the communion, He knows we are unequipped to command the respect of the unsaved when we would teach them to obey that other ordinance, to be baptized. Christ needs you at His house, at His table, when His day comes.

CHAPTER V.

PERSONAL ATTITUDE DURING THE COMMUNION

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."—1 Cor. 11: 30.

I. Supreme Importance of Our Attitude

In previous studies we have emphasized the importance of conscientious, regular, unbroken attendance at the communion. We introduce this study by saying that the all-important and determining factor, however, is the attitude of the communicant.

1. *Danger of ritualism and formalism.*

If mere duty, mere rule and mere formal participation mark our presence at the Lord's table, not only is the whole point lost, but actual wrong has been done. That which is sacred has been made carnal; that which is holy has been profaned; that which is significant has been robbed of all significance; that which was meant to be a power for practical, spiritual help has been stripped of its whole worth.

2. *Attitude determines results.*

Our thoughts, our attitude during communion, determine whether Pharisaism and formalism shall step in and take the place of actual true Christian worship. Our thoughts, our attention, our attitude during the communion, determine whether true and helpful worship or formalism shall result. (See 1 Cor. 11: 27-30.)

PERSONAL ATTITUDE

II. To Discern the Lord's Body and Blood

The Scriptures make it plain that one can actually eat and drink condemnation to himself, "*not discerning the Lord's body*" (1 Cor. 11:28); if we are merely participating in a ceremony, if we are merely performing a ritual, if we eat only bread and do not take care to discern that for which the bread stands, we are on the pathway to danger. Thoughtless, careless, wit-wandering participation is to be scrupulously and continuously avoided.

III. Self-examination

The Lord took thought for our every need. Among these needs is the need to take personal inventory of our Christian stock and standing, at regular intervals. The Holy Spirit, who is to guide us into all truth, has set the first day of the week, the beginning of each week, as the time and the Lord's table as the place. Therefore, a Scriptural requirement of attitude is that each one come examining himself. Leave this out, or change it to an attitude of examination, judgment and criticism of others, and we have, by our attitude, forfeited the whole benefit which the Lord meant we should receive.

IV. Personal Humility

That Christian who fails to receive an incentive for real and *bona-fide* humility at the Lord's table has failed to catch the real message which the communion emblems proclaim.

Illustration.—Suppose a young man, having a God-fearing, Christian mother, should wander into wayward paths and go on through gambling and drunkenness to

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the point where, in a drunken carousal, he commits murder. He is arrested, the evidence plainly convicts him, the law condemns him to die. The judge is ready to pronounce the sentence. His mother, not willing that he should go into eternity thus, pleads with the judge that she, who is ready to face eternity, be allowed to take the place on the scaffold instead of the son. Suppose the law would permit it, and the judge grant it. She goes on the scaffold in his stead, but asks him that the story be chiseled on her tombstone and that each year at the anniversary of her death he come, read the story and lay a wreath upon the grave. What kind of son would he be if he could come without humility? What kind of son if he could do this, and yet call it but a formality? What kind of Christians are we if we can come, look upon and read the inscription on the Lord's monument that tells of His death for us, and yet fail to come humble and repentant? "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread" (1 Cor. 11:28; also see Phil. 2:1-12).

CHAPTER VI.

THE COMMUNION A PERSONAL MATTER

"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."—1 Cor. 11: 28; Rom. 14: 12.

I. The Communion Viewed as a Ceremonial to Be Perpetuated by the Church

Those denominations which are more particularly marked by ritualism rather look upon the communion as a divinely commanded ordinance to be sacredly kept and to be carried on, carried out and carried forward by the priesthood, and the emblems scrupulously exhibited at set times and seasons and administered only by the priesthood.

There appears the thought that if this is done faithfully, and the communion attended occasionally (at least once a year) by each individual, all requirements and purposes have been fulfilled. In other words, the communion, by this view, is a ceremonial to be faithfully perpetuated by an institution.

We do not dispute that the communion is of the nature of a ceremonial, and that it is to be sacredly carried on by the church, but we hold that thus far we have but seen a Christ-planned means, and have not brought to light the aim and end. Has an individual Christian fulfilled his individual duty if he merely sees to it that the communion, as a ceremonial, is faithfully perpetuated at the Lord's house each Lord's Day?

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II. The Communion as a Strictly Individual Matter

In these studies we are presenting the thought that Christ asked His followers, Christians, individuals, to remember Him in this, His own appointed way. When each individual holds sacred the obligation to be at the Lord's table on the first day of the week, and goes individually to the Lord's house for that purpose, then the assembling will be a natural consequence and the exhibit of the emblems and the conduct of the ceremonial a natural and necessary result, rather than the end aimed at.

III. Consistency Would Compel Us to Attend

If we would try to teach others that every first day of the week, and not some occasional first day of the week, is the fitting and Scriptural time for the communion, how can we in any way be consistent if we ourselves, as Christians or individuals, attend only irregularly, spasmodically or occasionally? As a group we may stand for definite principles, but, unless we individually practice our teaching, it will never appeal to those whom we would teach. Consistency is evidence of sincerity. (Heb. 6:4-6.)

IV. A Comparison

By way of illustration, let us compare the two Christ-given ordinances—communion and baptism. As Christians we firmly hold that no one else can repent for us, no one else can accept Christ for us, no one else can be baptized for us. Baptism is a strictly individual matter. Granted that baptisms are regularly, Scripturally and faithfully carried on at the church which I

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attend, this can in no way fill the place or satisfy the need of my being baptized. Likewise the communion. No ceremonial, no group, can fulfill my duty to meet my Lord at His house at His table and remember Him in His own appointed way next Lord's Day. Our Lord and Master was more interested in personal and individual loyalty than in public ceremonial.

V. The Communion Is Not with Each Other, but with the Lord

Many have made the mistake of thinking the communion to be with each other or with a group. Hence much of the argument and confusion about open and closed communion. It should be remembered that the communion is with the Lord. Therefore, unless I am at the table and commune, there has been no communion so far as I am concerned, even though a thousand others should have met together and communed with the Lord.

Under such circumstances the fact will remain that I, a Christian, pledged to obey my Lord and also to set an example of obedience to the saved and the unsaved, have openly neglected to obey a command which He has given me, even though many other individuals may have obeyed that command on that first day of the week. May we repeat, the communion is a *personal*, an *individual*, matter and an obligation that can in no sense be discharged by proxy.

CHAPTER VII.

WHO SHOULD COMMUNE?

"The disciples came together to break bread."—Acts 20: 7.

I. Introduction

The subject of this study could easily lead us into deep water, but we shall rather choose to stay on safe and solid ground. Perhaps the easiest approach is to say that the preceding chapters have abundantly demonstrated that all Christians should break bread in remembrance of the Lord on the first day of each week. The question then presents itself: Who should not commune? Christians are understood to be those who believe in and accept Christ as the Saviour and obey Him as Lord and Master by being baptized into Him. *We thus come into Christ* (Gal. 3:27). We thus are buried to the old life and raised to walk the new life. (Rom. 6:3-5.)

II. What of Open and Closed Communion?

In all probability one phase of the discussion, on open and closed communion, is as much out of place as another, and we, as Christians only, but not the only Christians, have no part either way in the discussion. To take either side of this argument would involve the presumption that the Lord has commissioned some of us to sit in judgment and examination over the rest of us. This He has not done. The Scriptural rule is:

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“Let a man examine himself.” This again emphasizes the individual nature of the communion. We each come to the *Lord’s* table at the *Lord’s* invitation to commune with the *Lord*.

III. The Question of Worthiness to Commune

The question has arisen in the minds of many as to whether they are worthy to commune on a given Sunday because of sins committed in the past week.

1. *“There is none worthy, no, not one.”*

If only the perfect, the worthy, should commune, there would be no communion. “All are unprofitable servants.” However, we should remember that the communion is a table, “the Lord’s table,” and that this table, like any table, is set, not for those who are filled, but for those who are hungry. The Lord’s table is set, not for those who have achieved righteousness, but for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

2. *Should use rather than refuse the communion.*

The foregoing statement does not in any way conflict with the thought presented in Chapter V., on the individual’s attitude during the communion, or the Scripture warning in 1 Cor. 11:29. Communing indifferently is that against which we are solemnly warned. Therefore we should not refuse the communion awaiting our becoming worthy. It is a means given to help us to become worthy. We “renew” our minds, we feed our souls again on Him, we meet Him, look into His face, ask His forgiveness and reconsecrate our lives to His service.

3. *It is the manner that may be unworthy.*

We have said that *none* is worthy. Why, then, the warning in 1 Cor. 11:27-29? Note that the Scriptures

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use the adverb "unworthily" in the Authorized Version; it is translated, "In an unworthy manner," in the Revised Version.

Therefore it is again plain that it is not the Christian who may be worthy or unworthy, for none is *worthy*. However, it is fairly easy for even a good Christian to fall into partaking in an unworthy manner, carelessly, indifferently, "not discerning the Lord's body." "For *this cause* many among you are weak and sickly" (1 Cor. 11:30).

IV. Neither Invite nor Debar

Remembering that the table is the Lord's, we should also remember that it is He alone who can invite to His table. We can greet, welcome and fellowship with those others whom He has invited, but for any one of us to sit in judgment over another is out of place, as well as out of reason. The fact that He has invited me does not entitle me to invite others, whomsoever I will, nor does it empower me to exclude others. It is mine to teach and urge others to become His obedient followers and to teach them the benefits and honor of meeting the Lord regularly at His house and at His table.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COMMUNION A MONUMENT TO JESUS

"This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."—
1 Cor. 11: 25.

I. Purposes of a Monument

A monument is a memorial. Its purposes are not only to cause the one whom it memorializes to be remembered, but to try to perpetuate the principles for which he stood among those who follow after. A monument is to remind us not only of a person, but more particularly of his deeds, that we may contemplate and emulate them. The monument at Bunker Hill, together with its inscriptions, does more for the rising generations of Americans, by way of instilling in them a remembrance and appreciation of what it cost that our nation might be, than it does for those who fell on Bunker Hill. That monument renews our minds, increases our love of country, makes our hearts throb anew with patriotism.

II. An Enduring Monument

To be the most helpful, a monument should be enduring. The communion is the everlasting monument to Jesus. Had a monument of marble or granite or bronze been erected on Golgotha and the story of His death and suffering inscribed thereon, time and the elements would already have dimmed the inscription. But this monument, whose story is told in the bread

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and the cup, tells its story in letters as clear to-day as in the day it was erected. (Read Ezek. 37:26.)

III. A Practical Monument

A monument is erected really for the living to look upon, read its inscription and imbibe its message. Had a monument of granite or bronze been erected in Golgotha's Hill, only a very few of Christ's followers could ever have looked upon it once, and they at great trouble, pains and expense.

This monument—the communion—is such that every Christian in all the world, wherever he may be, may come and look upon it and read its inscription the first day of each week. There need be no long, expensive pilgrimages to the monument of Jesus. Where “two or three are gathered together,” there it may be found. (Matt. 18:20.)

IV. A Monument with a Message

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come” (1 Cor. 11:26). Not only time and tide can not obscure the message on Jesus' monument, but men can not obscure it. Jesus so planned that His story must be told and understood. However poorly the sermon may be preached, or however far it may wander from the basic facts of the Christ story, that story will yet be told in all its simple eloquence if the communion be observed as He asked that it should be observed. If an American, knowing no word of the Chinese language, should attend the services in a native church of Christ in Shanghai, China, next Sunday, he need not fail to receive and understand the story of the Christ that the

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communion so plainly and eloquently tells. Fifty Christians of fifty different nationalities, each understanding no language but his own, might sit in a single audience in a church of Christ where the communion is observed after the New Testament order, and each would get the story of the suffering, death, resurrection, atonement, love and sacrifice of the Christ. Every man would understand in his own tongue wherein he was born. The communion is a monument that eloquently and faithfully tells "the story" and preaches "the message" of "the Saviour."

CHAPTER IX.

EFFECTS OF UNIVERSAL ATTENDANCE AT THE LORD'S TABLE

"If ye do these things, ye shall never fall."—2 Pet. 1: 10.

I. Introduction

As we have progressed through these brief studies we have meant to keep, before all, a proposition that we made in the beginning: "Jesus gave no idle commands." There was a definite aim in each, and the aim in each was for the good of those who received His word and followed His leading. What are some of the actual effects that would surely result from a faithful, regular and universal keeping of His command to "do this until I come"? We shall mention three directions in which there would certainly be direct and definite effects. There are effects on the individual Christian who attends, effects on the other brethren and effects on the unsaved.

II. The Effect on the Christian Who Attends Faithfully

1. He has obeyed Jesus' command, and can rejoice in that assurance (Rev. 2: 10, 11).

2. He has made use of the means that Jesus devised and gave for continually renewing our minds, and thus being transformed (Rom. 12: 2).

3. He has kept his faith with the Lord, and thus increased his faith (2 Tim. 4: 7, 8).

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4. He has kept before him that remembrance which can not help but increase his appreciation of what Jesus did for him and what God offers him.

5. He has cultivated the habit of loyalty in matters of service to Christ.

6. He has constantly surrounded himself with those who will be most helpful to him (Heb. 10:25).

7. He has, therefore, "grown in grace and knowledge of the truth" and in usefulness to his Lord. (See 2 Pet. 3:17, 18.)

III. Effect on Other Brethren

1. *Admonishing each other.*

We are taught, in Rom. 15:14 and Col. 3:16, to admonish each other to the end of mutual spiritual benefit. However, personal loyalty, personal faithfulness and personal example are much more eloquent than merely admonishing by word of mouth. Our constant attendance does more to admonish others than any amount of words.

2. *Encouragement.*

Nothing so encourages one in any enterprise as to know for a surety that the others engaged in it can be counted on without question.

3. *Assurance.*

Nothing would put heart and assurance into all the brethren, for forward moves in great enterprises for Christ, like the definite knowledge that the whole group can be met and counted on definitely on the Lord's Day.

IV. Effect on the Unsaved

With all the talk of reaching and saving the unreached and unsaved, with all the plans devised, with

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all the money raised and spent, much of the world fails to believe the gospel because it does not believe that Christians believe it. The world discounts the sincerity of him who preaches baptism with all eloquence as the command applies to the sinner, and who at the same time shows meager regard for the command to keep most conscientiously that other ordinance which applies to the Christian. It takes fire to set fire, it takes faith to produce faith, it takes interest to produce interest, it takes sincere respect to beget sincere respect, it takes obedience to produce obedience. When we who are in the church learn to show noticeable and pronounced regard for those things which God, Christ, the Bible and the world expect us to regard, then, and then only, will the world heed the message we preach and the Christ whom we claim to love and serve. (See Jas. 2:17-20.)

The communion service, effectively conducted and faithfully and universally attended, would have a reviving and evangelizing power hitherto undreamed of. We seek to devise methods, and we pray for power. The communion offers both.

CHAPTER X.

IMPORTANCE OF THE COMMUNION IN THE PROPAGATION AND CONDUCT OF THE CHURCH

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is."—Heb. 10: 25.

I. Christ's Simple Plan for Propagating the Church

Christ gave the solid rock truth of His Christhood as the foundation-stone of His church, and said: "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." It is to go on and on. Yet He committed to the hands of men the actual founding, propagating and conducting of the church. He committed such a task to simple men, but specially chosen, prepared, instructed and *inspired*. But its propagation and conduct for the centuries to follow were committed to simple men *uninspired*. Therefore He provided a plan for founding and carrying on His church, a plan so simple that the simplest and poorest of the faithful disciples could carry out the task perfectly for Him.

II. A Simple New Testament Church Centers about the Lord's Table

As important a matter as it is to plant a church, and therefore to plant churches, and thus propagate the church, it is yet an exceedingly simple matter.

What constitutes a church of Christ? We believe

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the question can be answered by asking another. If, anywhere, two or three or more Christians join forces to meet about the Lord's table on the Lord's Day to break bread in memory of Him; read, study or preach His word; pray and have fellowship one with another—would any one question that there exists every essential requirement of a church of Christ? Elaborate plans, schemes, equipments, expenditures, organizations, ceremonials, are entirely unessential to a church of Christ. The communion service, with that which naturally surrounds it, is the Christ-given, and most simple, method for multiplying churches of Christ, and thus propagating the church.

III. The Communion the Simplest Means for Conducting a Church

When we demand that a church, or the church, must come up to humanly added standards of pomp, paraphernalia, equipment, program, ceremony, show and so-called efficiency, and must exist at great cost of money and clanking of machinery, or not be counted as justified to exist, then we make the conducting of a church a task fit only for experts and financiers.

But the simple, divinely conceived church of the Firstborn may be much more simply carried on with quite as efficient production of godliness, piety, purity and Christian loyalty, by centering it about the table of the Lord and surrounding it with those things mentioned as essentials of worship in Acts 2:42: "*They continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in breaking of bread and the prayers.*"

The Lord has by no means prohibited such extension of methods as may appear helpful to these ends,

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when a congregation has grown large in numbers and powerful in its abilities, but He has provided these essentials which enable the small church to function efficiently, and without which the large church becomes lost to its Christ-given purpose and is inefficient.

IV. The Communion as Christ's Guarantee of Correct Teaching

At the expense of repetition may we again say that the communion is itself the unbiased story of the basic facts of the gospel? The communion, administered with New Testament simplicity, preaches a sermon true to basic facts, sound in theology and unobscured by human bias or additions. The story of God's gift, God's love, Christ's sacrifice, crucifixion, atonement and death are thus re-enacted, as it were played, before the eyes, and these facts are thus pictured, just as an immersion pictures His burial and resurrection. Foreseeing the tendencies of men to wander from truth and garble a message in the telling, Christ has left this means as a guarantee that these basic truths shall be simply and faithfully told and pictured to the end of time. (1 Cor. 11:26.)

CHAPTER XI.

SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE AND POWER OF THE COMMUNION

"As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come."—1 Cor. 11: 26.

I. Introduction

In preceding studies we have mentioned the fact that the communion is not, and must not be allowed to develop into, a mere formality or ceremonial. In this lesson we shall attempt to help toward an appreciation of the *spiritual significance* and *power* of the communion.

II. Significance of the Communion

The communion is intended to picture and recall the most tragic event in the history of the world—the crucifixion and death of our Saviour. It is the continual reminder of His sacrifice, His suffering and His atonement for us. It is to remind us constantly that "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the *blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7). We are to keep in mind that there is *no other way* by which sin can be eradicated. Certain acids may remove ink stains, but only the blood of Christ can remove sin stains.

The communion, therefore, tells of the *one* and *only* hope for sinful men. If it merely told of *one* hope,

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the matter would not be so serious, but when it tells of the *only* hope, then its importance is beyond measure.

III. The Message Is a Spiritual Message to the Hearts of Men

1. *If the message is not made plain, the communion fails.*

This message of the communion is a spiritual message to the hearts of men. The communion involves a physical act, but it is by no means a mere physical act. If its helpful, strengthening and inspiring spiritual message does not stand out and get to the participants, then the communion has failed almost entirely in its purpose. It has become but a ceremony, a formality, a mere physical act.

2. *Reasons for failure.*

The communion may fail for either of two reasons. It may be so carelessly, or, on the other hand, so formally, administered that its message is not made apparent. Also, the participant may participate so indifferently or so thoughtlessly that the real meaning entirely fails to appear to him.

3. *Our responsibilities in administration and participation.*

The physical act of eating the loaf and a formal participation in the service would be quite sufficient if the Roman Catholic Church were right in its teaching that the blessing of the bread by the priest transforms the bread into the actual body of Christ, and that one who communes has actually taken into his body the very flesh of the Saviour, and thereby received the benefits intended. This not being the Scriptural fact in the case, there is nothing left but for the communion to be

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so administered and so participated in that the spiritual message is made plain. It becomes necessary, therefore, for the elders, deacons and ministers so to conduct the service that the spiritual message, meaning and impact of the communion may reach the hearts of the people.

IV. The Communion a Practical and Powerful Help to the Christian Life

1. *We must use the God-given means of helping us to live the Christian life.*

To be saved one must become a Christian and remain a Christian. To remain a Christian one must as certainly follow the God-given plan and use the God-given means of Bible study, prayer, communion and service as he must use the God-given means of repentance and baptism in becoming a Christian. The communion is at the very heart and center of the means given for keeping spiritually alive and for growing in the Christian life. Used as it was intended to be used, it is at the same time the most practical as well as the most powerful help in either avoiding or overcoming a fall.

2. *The communion is a part of Christ's plan to keep us in the faith.*

That Christian who faithfully avails himself of the benefits of the communion service will find it to be a real and practical power in overcoming temptation, remaining faithful and growing "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." On the other hand, that Christian who has looked upon the communion as a mere ceremony or formal obligation, and therefore of no practical value in the problem of

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the Christian life, has failed to see the communion at all, as it was intended to be seen. Certainly he has failed to use it as it was intended to be used, and quite as certainly has failed to avail himself of the divinely given and most powerful help to Christian growth and strength.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW TO ADMINISTER THE COMMUNION SERVICE

"But let all things be done decently and in order."—1 Cor. 14: 40.

I. Importance of Care in Administration

In the study immediately preceding we have seen that, if the spiritual message of the communion is not made plain, the value of the communion has been almost entirely lost.

With the exception of some who are well grounded in the inner meanings of the gospel, a large part of each audience will depend on those conducting the service for their spiritual appreciation, understanding and valuation of the service.

Merely to *go through the form* of the service, patterning after the ceremony as conducted by some one else, should not be thought a satisfactory way to carry out the Lord's will in this matter.

II. Need to Administer the Communion So that It May Fulfill Its Purpose

The communion should be so administered as to make it capable of satisfying the souls of Christians and edifying them even in the absence of a set sermon by a professional preacher. At present, and in most cases, it must be frankly admitted that the communion, as ordinarily administered, does not alone seem to sat-

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isfy or meet the soul needs of a large number of church-members. However, that does not mean that there is not the edifying and soul-satisfying power in it. It merely means that we have failed to bring it out.

We shall no doubt labor with indifferent results so long as we let people think that to attend the communion is a mere "privilege" or a casual "duty." So many privileges and so many duties confront us daily that we become dulled to both at times. Certainly we should teach that the communion *is* a privilege and also that it *is a duty*, but to this we should take care to add such attractiveness and spiritual power in conducting the service that, whatever else Christians may miss, they will be inclined never to miss the communion.

III. How May Improvements Be Made in Administration?

1. *Make the communion primary, and not secondary.*

If we were to answer in a sentence, "How conduct the communion?" we should say: "So conduct it that it will occupy actually that place in the service and in the minds of the people which we assign to it theoretically." Practically all our brethren, ministers and people admit that the communion service is the central purpose and feature of the Lord's Day meeting, but do we actually make it stand out as such? If a stranger, unacquainted with our aims, should attend our morning worship, would he easily gather the idea that we had "met together to break bread"? Would it be plain to him that this was our main purpose?

2. *Practical suggestions for improvement.*

We would suggest, therefore, that we might improve our administration by some of the following means:

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(1) Let those who have charge of the Lord's table make a careful study of the communion both from the Scriptures and other sources of help.

(2) Make thorough preparation for conducting the service each time. (This is more fully treated in Chapter XIII.)

(3) Have the table linen spotlessly clean. Be prompt in preparing the communion table and keep it in a central and prominent place during the entire services of the Lord's Day.

(4) See that all teachers are equipped to teach and do teach the facts about the communion.

(5) Call frequent attention to it, but never nag.

(6) Take time for the communion service without making it long and tedious. Eliminate all unnecessary movements. Make the talks, if any, very short and pointed. Use more deacons and serve more promptly.

(7) Seek to obtain general reverence in the service, which, among other things, means perfect quiet. This can be attained. Adult church-members are oftentimes the worst offenders. Fitting and proper music is not only not objectionable, but helpful.

(8) Keep the young people in mind. See that the service is so conducted as to meet their needs.

(9) Make it a practice to observe the communion in the evening service for those who can not possibly attend in the morning. Let it be generally known that you make it a practice to take the communion to the sick and the shut-ins.

IV. Matters of Order and Decorum about the Table

1. First of all, the *Lord's* table centrally located and spotlessly arranged by reverent hands.

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2. *One* loaf which should be broken as a part of the service. (For Scriptural reasons, see Campbell's "Christian System," p. 268.)

3. Two or more elders, and, where desired, the minister, presiding and participating. In some places young men sit with the elders at the table and read brief selections of Scripture.*

4. Whispered conversation by elders, minister or deacons to be scrupulously avoided.

5. Prearranged plans for observing a certain order of service.

6. Dignity and reverence, yet the avoidance of formalism.

7. If there are remarks made at the table, let them be pointed and brief.

* For list of suitable Scripture readings, see pages 66 and 67.

CHAPTER XIII.

PREPARATION FOR CONDUCTING THE COMMUNION

"Let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well pleasing to God with reverence and awe."—Paul.

I. Reasons for Preparation

With what has been said in the studies on "The spiritual significance of the communion" and on "How to conduct the communion," it is apparent that it is impossible to conduct the service effectively without most heart-searching preparation. It is plain that a service of such deep significance and importance in the divine scheme calls for quite as conscientious preparation as does the preaching of the gospel.

Almost any one, by close observation, may quickly learn to *go through* the service following some form, but the question is: Can it be made effective with such meager preparation? Is this failure to prepare carefully not very probably the reason why the service has failed to hold that grip on the hearts of the people which it was apparently designed to hold?

Very few ministers fail to make special preparation each and every week for the preaching of the gospel on the Lord's Day, but how many deem it necessary to prepare themselves, or urge the preparation of the elders, deacons or deaconesses for their participation in the sacred service of the communion?

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II. Physical Preparation

Considering the sacredness of the communion service and its importance in the church of the living God, does it not call for most careful preparation in all respects? Among other things, the physical preparation should not be left to chance or possible careless oversight.

1. *The Lord's table.*

Conscientious elders and ministers will never leave it to chance that the table shall be fittingly prepared. A part of the preparation should consist in a study of whether the local equipment is in keeping with the sacredness and importance of the service. No chance should be taken that there may be insufficient cups filled, where the individual cups are used. No chance should be taken that there may be a plate of fragments instead of "the loaf."

2. *Personal apparel.*

They who preside should be decently and respectfully attired. While a man may be quite as religious presiding at the Lord's table with his coat off, so might he be quite as religious anywhere else in the service with his hat on. But there are well-defined ways and customs by which we show respect and by which we show disrespect and to go to any extreme of the unconventional surely can not be the best way to show respect.

The communion calls for every means by which we may show respect and reverence. Certainly the privilege of handling the sacred emblems at the Lord's table calls for as much decorum in manners and dress as would our participation in and assistance at a funeral or a wedding.

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III. Mental Preparation

Should any elder count himself equipped to administer the communion unless he has first thoroughly familiarized himself with the entire Scripture teaching on the communion? How many elders—in fact, how many preachers—can even turn readily in the Scriptures to the few plain teachings on the communion? (See 2 Tim. 2:15.)

How many elders have ever read one treatise on the communion, or made a study of its significance, place or importance? How many can give an answer to those who designate the communion as “a mere formality,” or to those who would claim that there is no Scriptural ground for breaking the bread on each first day of the week? How many elders and deacons are there who perhaps themselves look upon the communion as merely a ceremony? How many are there who conscientiously and prayerfully prepare the brief talk they expect to make at the Lord’s table on the next Lord’s Day? (2 Cor. 5:20.)

We only ask these questions and leave the reader to answer.

IV. Spiritual Preparation

1. *Prayer.*

Certainly every elder learns to offer a prayer of thanksgiving at the table, but how many have prepared to preside by praying the Father beforehand to help them so conduct the service that it may reach and touch the hearts of the people? How many prepare by praying the Father to help them to be fitted in mind and heart to administer the emblems representing the body and blood of the Lord? (Luke 18:1.)

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2. *Self-examination.*

It is not improbable that he who would lead in a service which calls for self-examination will succeed much better if he carefully makes it a custom to practice self-examination as a preparation.

3. *Devotional reading.*

If one who is to preside at the Lord's table saturates himself with the scandals and murders contained in the usual Sunday morning newspaper, rather than with that which is "true," "honorable," "just," "pure," "lovely" and "of good report," how can he expect to be used to lead in such a way that the Lord's table under his hands may shine forth with its message of the Christ? (Phil. 4: 8.)

CHAPTER XIV.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COMMUNION *

1. Question: Should those who are not elders preside at the communion table?

Answer to Question 1: There is no Scriptural command or admonition that the elders preside over the communion either exclusively, habitually or at all. However, the custom comes naturally and rightfully from the fact that the elders are the Scripturally designated, spiritual overseers of the congregation. The communion being strictly a spiritual service, a part of the worship, and being intended to have a very direct bearing on the spiritual welfare of the flock, it is certainly within the province of the elders' duties to thus preside. (See Acts 20:28.)

When the minister (evangelist) presides, he is acting in the capacity of an elder, and such a procedure is in no way out of harmony with the spirit of the New Testament.

No one is authorized to "lord it over" the Lord's table. Certainly those denominations that deny

* In answering the questions in this chapter, we have consulted not only the New Testament, but the early and medieval history of the church as contained in church histories and encyclopedias, and also all that has been written on the subject by Alexander Campbell, Robert Milligan, Isaac Errett, John W. McGarvey and others. For those who wish a much more exhaustive answer to these questions or to the chapter on "Objections," see Bibliography, pages 67, 68.

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the emblems to the members of the flock unless the emblems be "blessed by" and "administered by" the priest or preacher, have allowed the so-called "clergy" to arrogate to themselves an authority over the communion totally unauthorized in the New Testament.

Likewise there is no authority in the New Testament for elders reserving for themselves the sole and exclusive right to administer the communion. Where qualified elders can be present it is fitting that they should preside. Where such are not present it is not proper that the communion be neglected. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Where two or three Christians may gather together on the Lord's Day, they should certainly do so, and should remember the Lord on the Lord's Day in the Lord's appointed way, regardless of whether there be elders present or not.

2. Question: Is it proper to conduct the communion at any other place than at the regular meeting-place of the congregation—a home, for instance?

Answer to Question 2: Yes. There are many Christians located where there is no regular Lord's Day breaking of bread. They should meet on the Lord's Day and observe the communion. Others are prohibited by physical reasons from attending the regular place of meeting. The elders should visit and care for all shut-ins, giving them the opportunity to break bread. Christian families away from the church should not neglect to remember their Lord on the Lord's Day.

There is quite sufficient Scriptural example for breaking bread in homes and halls. Rom. 16:5, "The church that is in their house;" Philemon 2, "The church in thy house"—seem to refer to such a practice.

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3. Question: Is it proper to observe the communion at any other than the morning worship hour?

Answer to Question 3: Yes. Quite apparently it was observed in the evening exclusively in the beginning. Observing it at the morning hour is a custom only. In fact, we believe that the Lord's table ought to be spread all the day and during all services on the Lord's Day. Opportunity for breaking bread and encouragement to break bread at the evening hour or any other hour ought to be offered to those who can not be present at the usual morning hour. (See Campbell's "Christian System," p. 267.)

4. Question: Did the Lord or did the apostles anywhere command us to commune on the first day of every week?

Answer to Question 4: No. Neither did He nor they command us to meet for that purpose on any first day of the week—monthly, quarterly or annually. However, He did leave the apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit whom He sent, to do many things. He left them to give us the New Testament. He left them to establish the church. He left them to establish the time and frequency of the communion. This they did. They set the example and sanctioned, by their presence and participation, "the assembling" and "the breaking of bread" on "*the first day of the week.*" (See Acts 2: 42; 20: 7 and 1 Cor. 16: 1, 2.)

The Holy Spirit gives us a very clear statement of what the baptized believers did. "They continued steadfastly in [four things] the *apostles' doctrine . . . and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.*" All Christian bodies believe in, teach and practice three of these requirements on every Lord's Day. Why omit

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one of them? There is quite as much Scripture teaching for the breaking of bread every Lord's Day as there is for meeting at all on any Lord's Day for any one of these four things. (See Acts 2:42; see also Chapter XV. on "objections" answered.)*

5. Question: How many are needed to assemble in order that the communion may be observed?

Answer to Question 5: Inasmuch as the communion is an individual matter, and as we really commune with the Lord, we do not know that it is absolutely necessary that there be an assembly at all. One faithful disciple may thus remember his Lord on the Lord's Day. However, where there are others, even as many as "two or three," they should arrange to "assemble together." (See Heb. 10:25 and Matt. 18:20.)

6. Question: What kind of bread should be used?

Answer to Question 6: Though the Lord's Supper was instituted in connection with the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, yet the Lord's Supper is not the Passover. There were very minute and strict instructions given in the Old Testament as to bread and other items of food to be used in the Passover Supper. There is no instruction nor is there any statement of apostolic example as to the *kind* of bread to be used in the Lord's Supper. It is to be "a loaf."† There has been much discussion from early times as to whether the communion bread should be "strictly unleavened bread." There is no New Testament Scripture to definitely settle the matter, and the most learned and de-

* Also see, for exhaustive treatment of the subject, Alexander Campbell's "Christian System," pages 265 to 293.

† A. Campbell says "one loaf." (See "Christian System," page 268.)

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vout of our own brethren differ somewhat in their opinions and conclusions. It is our own conclusion that it is not necessary that the bread be unleavened. It is a matter to be left to the conscience and judgment of the congregation.

It is our opinion, however, that "the loaf" should be a specially prepared loaf, prepared intentionally and exclusively for use at the Lord's table, and that the remnants should be properly disposed of and not handed out miscellaneously, to be eaten by the children and others after the conclusion of the service. (See 1 Cor. 10:17 and Acts 20:7-11; see also Isaac Errett's "Querists' Drawer," p. 98.)

7. Question: Where may communion bread be secured, or how provided?

Answers to Question 7:

1. A very thin wafer or loaf of strictly unleavened bread may be bought in cartons at very small expense from almost any church-supply house.

2. A loaf of unleavened bread may be baked in the home, the dough being practically the same as unleavened pie-crust dough.

3. In some congregations a home-baked loaf somewhat raised, but less light than biscuit loaf, is used.

Recipe for communion bread: One pint flour, one-eighth pound of butter, half-teaspoonful salt, mixed with water. Roll in thin sheets and bake until done.

4. Some congregations merely cut a square from the center of a loaf of ordinary light bread.

5. Some others use ordinary large salt crackers.

Where the latter are used there are a number of objections. First of all, such a use seems to cheapen the service. It is apparent that the least possible thought

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or care has been put into providing the emblem. It is apparent that there are a number of presumed loaves instead of one loaf. Crackers crumble and break up badly.

Where a piece is cut from any ordinary loaf of light bread it is quite apparent that no special loaf has been prepared for the Lord's table. It lacks somewhat in the matter of being an exclusive memorial with our Saviour, and Him only, in mind. As to the first three suggestions, we have no preference, and suggest that the matter be determined by each congregation according to their Christian judgment.

8. Should fermented or unfermented wine be used?

Answer to Question 8: Much has been said and argued, pro and con, on this subject. We wish here to state two plain facts. The first is that nowhere in the New Testament is the word "wine" (*vinos*) used in connection with the Lord's Supper. The other fact is that the scholars are by no means agreed that fermented wine was used even at the last Supper. The terms used in the New Testament are "fruit of the vine" and "the cup."

The blood of the grape most fitly represents the blood of Him "who was bruised for our iniquities." Cyprian says: "When the blood of the grape is mentioned, what else is set forth than the wine of the cup of the blood of the Lord?" ("Ante-Nicene Fathers," Vol. V., p. 360.)

As to the use of fermented wine may we add the following facts:

1. Fermentation is a process of decay. A decayed element or emblem does not fittingly represent the blood of our Lord.

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2. Fermented wine has a tendency to rekindle the appetite of those who seek to abstain. Even scholars who express a preference for the fermented wine say that "after all, the kind of wine used is an inference." Then, why use that which is hurtful?

3. It gives religious sanction to the use of a beverage which has destroyed innumerable thousands. Its use puts a weapon in the hands of those who oppose abstinence and self-control.

The conclusion of the whole matter is, use only the unfermented juice of the grape. It fulfills every New Testament requirement; it most fittingly represents that which it is intended to represent; it avoids that which is dangerous to some, offensive to nearly all, and not necessary to any.

9. How prepare and keep or where secure this communion emblem?

Answer to Question 9:

1. Methods for preparing.

a. Boil the grapes, strain out the juice, add an equal amount of sugar and reheat to scalding and can as for usual keeping.

b. Where preferred, make grape jelly, and, when wanted for use, add water and reheat.

Both these methods avoid fermentation.

2. Thoroughly unfermented grape juice may now be purchased in large or small quantities in practically every community. The only criticism is that it is suggestive of easy effort, commercialism and lack of being prepared by reverent hands especially for use at the sacred service. This communion emblem should never be made by melting jellies made from other fruits than the grape.

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10. Question: Who may partake of the communion?

Answer to Question 10: This question is answered in Chapter VII.

However, we shall add a word here in regard to a practical problem that comes up in the conduct of the service. Many are often perplexed as to what statement to make, or what invitation to extend. A statement somewhat as follows, graciously and lovingly put, will bridge the gap, answer the purpose and avoid the appearance of either excluding or inviting:

“As we now assemble at the Lord’s table in obedience to His command and loving request, that we may remember Him in His own appointed way, may we say to all who are present that this day is the Lord’s Day, this house is the Lord’s house, and this table is the Lord’s table. Being His table, it is not our privilege either to invite any one, nor is it ours to exclude any one. It is His table and He has long ago invited every follower of His to His table. Let each one come examining himself, and so let him eat and drink. The members of this congregation are most happy to greet you here to-day, and wish you all peace and joy in His name.”

11. Question: What names are properly applied to the communion?

Answer to Question 11: There are four Scriptural terms used to name this New Testament ordinance. They are:

1. The breaking of bread (Acts 11:42, 46; 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16).
2. The Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:20).
3. “The communion” or “the communion service” (1 Cor. 10:16).

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4. The Lord's table (1 Cor. 10:21).

The terms "the sacrament" and "eucharist" are sometimes used, but they are of human origin. They are Latin and Greek terms applied respectively by the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic Churches. The former term was applied because the communion was supposed to be an oath or vow to the Lord. As the term *sacramentum* signified an oath taken by a Roman soldier to be true to his general and his country, they began to call the communion an oath to the Lord. The Greek Church applied the term "eucharist." *Eucharista* meant the giving of thanks, because, before participating, thanks were presented for the loaf and cup. As the calling of Bible things by Bible names is an important principle among those who would restore the New Testament church, it is certainly advisable to use only New Testament appellations for this New Testament ordinance, and the New Testament names are those numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, above.

12. Question: Where can help be secured in the matter of conducting the communion and other features of the worship service where no minister is present?

Answer to Question 12: A volume, entitled "Lord's Day Worship Services," by E. W. Thornton, containing fifty-two complete services with short sermons to be read, is pronounced the best and most practical help for the purpose that has been published.

CHAPTER XV.

ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS TO EVERY-LORD'S-DAY COMMUNION

Objection I.

"The Lord does not command us to observe the communion EVERY Lord's Day."

Answers to Objection I.*

1. *Answers from the Scriptures.*

Jesus nowhere commanded the breaking of bread on *every* first day of the week, nor did He command it to be done on *any* first day of the week, so far as we know by any recorded word. Those who offer the above objection, but at the same time hold the communion on *occasional* first days of the week, whether monthly, quarterly or annually, have controverted their own objection. There is as much Scriptural command for *every* first day as for *any* first day. If their objection is valid, they could quite as well choose to hold it on the seventh day once each seven years.

We believe that all will admit that Jesus left many things, pertaining to the church, to be established and

* We shall divide these answers to Objection I. into three divisions: Scriptural, historical and quoted opinions from eminent scholars of the various centuries. We wish here, as elsewhere, to acknowledge our indebtedness to the writings of A. Campbell, J. W. McGarvey, Robert Milligan and Isaac Errett, which we have just given a rather thorough perusal and from which we have drawn in answering these objections. For exhaustive treatment of the subject, see Bibliography, pages 67, 68.

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set in order by the *divinely* appointed and *divinely* guided apostles. Among these things were: The starting of the church (Acts 2); the proclaiming and writing down of the gospel terms of pardon, as in Acts 2, 8-10 and 16; the laying down and writing of the rules of divine guidance for Christian duty and conduct as contained in the Epistles. Thus, among other things left for these divinely appointed and divinely guided apostles to do, was to establish *the time* for the breaking of bread. Jesus, referring to the breaking of bread, said, "Do this." He left them to establish the time and frequency, just as He left them to do these other things. Consider the following:

- (1) Jesus appointed the apostles (Luke 6).
- (2) Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth (John 16).
- (3) Jesus did send the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2).
- (4) The apostles did give us the inspired Word (2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21).
- (5) This inspired Word clearly indicates "*the first day of the week*" as *the* time for doing the things enumerated in Acts 2:42, which things constituted the elements of Christian worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20 and 16:1, 2).

In fact, as pointed out again and again by Christian scholars of almost all the denominations and through a period of all the centuries, Acts 20:7 seems clearly to indicate not only that they met regularly on the first day of the week *and* broke bread, but "*to break bread.*" In other words, to observe the Lord's Supper was the central purpose of their meeting.

Acts 20:7 does not say, "When they had met together on a first day of the week," thus indicating an

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unusual or spasmodic event, but does say, "And on *the* first day of the week when we were gathered together to break bread." The definite article, as so used in all languages, represents a regularly recurring event. When we say, "We celebrate our nation's birthday on *the* Fourth of July," it clearly indicates that it is a regular, and not a spasmodic, celebration. To make it clear that it is to be done any less frequently than each and every Fourth of July, we should have to add words explaining that it is done every other year or every ten years.

This breaking of bread at Troas (Acts 20:7) was in the presence of, with the participation of and with the sanction of an apostle who was in turn guided by the Holy Spirit of God, sent by the Lord for the purpose of guiding them into all truth. There is not a vestige of Scripture that suggests any less frequent observance.

An attempt has been made to use 1 Cor. 11:20 to indicate that they met for other purposes and without the breaking of bread, but this entire passage, carefully read, becomes the strongest kind of confirmation of the fact that the central purpose of meeting was for the breaking of bread. Read it thus and you easily will see that the apostle is upbraiding them for having turned the meeting into such a riotous banquet of ordinary feasting that they had made it impossible "to eat the Lord's supper." The Revised Version makes this plainer than the King James.

2. *Historical facts and confirmations.*

(1) Pliny, in his epistles, Book X.; Justin Martyr, in his "Second Apology for the Christians," and Tertullian, "De Ora.," page 135, testify that the breaking

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of a loaf was the universal practice in all the weekly assemblies of the brethren.

(2) Dr. Neander, born in 1789, a Jew who was later converted to Christianity and became probably the most outstanding of all church historians, states the matter as follows: "As we have already remarked, the celebration of the Lord's Supper was still held to constitute an essential part of divine worship on every Sunday, as appears from Justin Martyr (A. D. 150), and the whole church partook of the communion after they had joined in the amen of the preceding prayer." He also asserts that the deacons carried the emblems "to every one present, in order." It was held to be necessary that all Christians in the place should, by participating in this communion, "maintain their union with the Lord and with His church;" and hence the deacons carried the bread and the cup to strangers, to the sick and "to prisoners and to all who were prevented from being present at the assembly" ("History of Christian Religion and Church," Vol. I., p. 332).

(3) John Erskine, a Presbyterian of high standing, born 1721, says in his "Dissertations," page 271: "In the fourth century, when all things began to be changed by baptized pagans, the practice of weekly communion began to decline. Some of the councils strove to keep it up. That held at Illiberis, in Spain, A. D. 324, decreed that no offering should be received from such as did not receive the Lord's Supper" ("Can. 28, Council of Illiberis").

"The council at Antioch, A. D. 341, decreed that all who came to the church and heard the Scriptures read, but afterward joined not in the prayer and receiving the sacrament, should be cast out of the church

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till such time as they gave public proof of their repentance" ("Can. 2, Council of Antioch").

"The tide of worldliness and indifference was stronger than these efforts of the councils, so in 506, A. D., the Council of Agatha, in Languedoc, decreed that 'none should be esteemed good Christians who did not commune *at least three times a year*—Christmas, Easter and Whitsunday.' "

Here is the beginning of official sanction of unfrequent communion. All the rules and decrees setting various times other than each Lord's Day have been promulgated at various times and by various church councils and church bodies since this council at Agatha in the year 506 A. D.

3. *Answers from eminent and well-known leaders.*

(1) John Brown (Presbyterian), author of a dictionary of the Bible, says: "All the arguments I ever knew advanced in support of the unfrequent administration of the Lord's Supper appear to me altogether destitute of force." He further says: "Did not the Papists of old pretend to maintain and advance its solemnity by a reduction of the frequency of administration? Did they not take away the cup from the people? Did they not annex the administration of this ordinance to those seasons which superstition had aggrandized; namely, Easter, Pentecost and Christmas? Did they not annex a world of ceremonies to it? Did they not pretend that it was a real sacrifice and that the elements were changed by consecration into the real body and blood of the Christ? . . . The means by which the unfrequent administration of this ordinance appears to me to have been introduced into the church do not savor of the God of truth."

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(2) Calvin, the real founder of the principles of Presbyterianism, complaining of the unfrequent communions, says: "It ought to have been far otherwise. *Every week* at least the Lord's table should have been spread for Christian assemblies." He also says, in his "Institutes," Book IV., Chapter XVII., Section 46: "And truly this custom which enjoins communicating* once a year is a most evident contrivance of the devil, by whose instrumentality soever it may have been determined."

(3) John Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism, says, in his letters to America, 1784: "I also advise the elders to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's Day."

Objection II.

"If practiced too frequently, the communion would become common and lose its solemnity and sacred hold and influence."

Answer to Objection II.

To offer such an objection, which is, on the face of it, nothing more than a purely human and individual opinion, would seem to offer but a weak support indeed on which to determine the proper time and season for a matter so sacred as this ordinance established by the Lord Himself. However, as this objection is yet frequently offered, we answer it briefly.

We believe we can not improve upon the answer given by the eminent Presbyterian, John Brown. He says: "If our unfrequent administration of this ordinance renders it solemn, would it not become much more

* The words "commune" and "communicate" were used interchangeably for some centuries.

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so if administered only once in seven, ten, twenty, thirty, sixty or a hundred years? . . . Shall we not then find that they who pray once in a month or hear a sermon once a year have their minds far more religiously impressed with solemn views of God than those who pray every day and hear a hundred sermons within the year?"

Is a mother's love less appreciated because experienced every day rather than once in a month or once in a year? To say so is nonsense. The objection falls of its own weakness.

Objection III.

"The frequent communion in the early days of the church was helpful and was needed. It was practiced every first day because persecutions raged and they feared each first day might be their last; whereas we now dwell in security and need not commune so frequently."

Answer to Objection III.

If we were to do away with the communion entirely and substitute for it the Catholic ordinance of "extreme unction," then this objection might be tenable. The communion, however, is quite evidently not merely something to use in emergency to *prepare for death*, but is a most active power to help us to *"live the Christian life."*

Furthermore, what assurance does any Christian have to-day that any particular communion on any Lord's Day may not be his last meeting with the Lord before he meets Him in eternity? This objection, like the others, is but a weak, human argument presented in the face of the mass of Scriptural and historic evidence. Scripture and facts should prevail.

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Objection IV.

"The primitive times were times of great spiritual liveliness and enthusiasm which called for frequent communion, whereas it is quite otherwise now."

Answer to Objection IV.

Since the plain, Scriptural intent of the communion is to feed the hungering and weakening spirit, revive the lagging appreciation of the atonement which Christ made for us, and renew enthusiasm for service to Him, is not the regular first-day communion service quite as much needed now as in the early days of the church?

If this is a time of spiritual lethargy and spiritual decline, as the objection would imply, then the need for the communion on the first day of each week is greater now than it was in those first days.

COMPENDIUM OF SCRIPTURES BEARING DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY ON THE COMMUNION SERVICE

1. *Institution of communion.*

Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26.

2. *Service and the time of observance sanctioned by the Holy Spirit.*

John 16:8-13; Acts 2:37-42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20-22.

3. *Emblems used.*

Matt. 26:26-28; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:17; Matt. 26:29.

4. *Warnings against contention, indifference and thoughtlessness at the table.*

1 Cor. 11:27-30, also verses 20-22; Heb. 11:4-6.

5. *Who should partake?*

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- Acts 2:42, 43; 1 Cor. 1:1, 2 taken with 11:23-26.
6. *Message and meaning of the communion.*
1 Cor. 10:16-21 and 11:26; Matt. 26:26-28.
7. *Related Scriptures.*
John 14:15; 1 John 1:7; Matt. 5:23, 24; 1 Cor. 5:7, 8; Matt. 28:18-20.

OTHER NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE READINGS ESPECIALLY SUITABLE FOR USE AT THE LORD'S TABLE

Matt. 12:25-30; Luke 24:33-47; John 1:10-17; John 6:45-58; John 14:15-28; Acts 2:41-47; Rom. 3:20-26; Rom. 12:1-21; 1 Cor. 13:1-10; 1 Cor. 15:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Gal. 3:23-29; Eph. 2:1-13; Phil. 2:1-12; Phil. 4:4-9; 1 Thess. 5:11-23; Tit. 2:1-8; Heb. 10:16-27; Jas. 2:1-10; Rev. 5:1-12; Rev. 22:17.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF HELPFUL INFORMATION ON THE COMMUNION SERVICE AND ALLIED MATTERS

1. Campbell's "Christian System." Pages 265 to 293. Condensed from the *Millennial Harbinger*. Aside from *Millennial Harbinger* treatment, this is the most complete and satisfactory statement that has been written by any of our own writers.
2. "Millennial Harbinger Abridged." Pages 189 to 260. Contains all that needs to be known in the Scriptural and historical study of the communion.
3. Milligan's "Scheme of Redemption." One chapter. Does not treat extensively the matter of frequency, etc. Page 427.

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4. Isaac Errett's "Querists' Drawer." Pages 92-94, 98 and 237.
5. McGarvey's "Fourfold Gospel." Pages 641 to 650. Communion and foot-washing.
6. McGarvey's "Commentary on Acts." Pages 178-182. Discussion of Acts 20.
7. "Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Encyclopedia." Vol. II., pages 442 to 444. Some valuable information.
8. "Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Encyclopedia." Vol. V., pages 509 to 515. Extensive treatment, historical and otherwise; Lord's Supper.
9. "Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Encyclopedia." Vol. I., pages 880 to 882. Subject of "Bread" discussed.

